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ABSTRACT

Although the traditional mentoring paradigm in graduate schools is that of a single faculty-student dyad working intensively on scholarly and research endeavors, contemporary training models in professional psychology require new approaches to mentoring. Graduate programs must tailor mentoring to meet their missions and cultures. The vertical team model is one promising medium for mentoring in large professional programs. In this model, faculty lead research-oriented or clinically-oriented weekly team meetings for the purpose of teaching, modeling, and supervising student research or clinical work in the faculty member's area of expertise. Students then select teams based on shared interests. These faculty members then become the student's program advisor. In this way even programs with large student numbers can facilitate faculty-student matching and mentoring formation. (Contains 14 references.) (JDM)

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Creating a Culture of Mentoring: Recommendations for Graduate Programs[1]

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In graduate education, mentorships are personal relationships in which a more experienced faculty member acts as a guide, role model, sponsor and advocate of a less experienced student (protégé). A mentor provides the protégé with knowledge, advice, counsel, challenge, and support in the protégé's pursuit of becoming a full member of a particular profession (Clark, Harden & Johnson, 2000; O'Neil & Wrightsman, in-press). Research on the benefits of mentoring consistently shows that mentorships bolster professional identity and contribute significantly to tangible career outcomes such as income, promotion rate and career satisfaction (Cameron & Blackburn, 1981; Roche, 1979).

Recent research on mentoring in the field of psychology indicates that between 50% and 60% of recent graduates were mentored (Atkinson et al., 1994; Clark et al., 2000; Cronan-Hillix et al., 1986; Mintz, et al., 1995). Clinical psychology students and students in professional schools are significantly less likely than experimental students or students in research-oriented programs to be mentored (Johnson et al., 2000). In spite of these survey findings, Training Directors of APA-approved programs estimate that most students (82%) are mentored (Dickinson & Johnson, 2000). Although mentoring of students serves as one salient program outcome (APA, 1996), and although more educators are calling for attention to mentoring during accreditation site-visits (Ellis, 1992), little has been written about how to facilitate faculty-student mentoring.

In this presentation, I propose several strategies for increasing rates of mentoring and developing mentorship-affirming cultures in psychology doctoral programs. Brewer (1990) emphasized that students in all doctoral programs should be involved in a "deliberate process of socialization" (p. 133), part of which is mentoring by a faculty

exemplar. The current challenge for programs in the clinical or professional arena seems to be providing exposure to a wide variety of clinical experiences and psychologist supervisors while simultaneously affording each student the opportunity for an ongoing relationship with a primary faculty supervisor who is likely to engage the student as a mentor. Additional challenges include institutional policies that exclusively reward research productivity at the expense of attention to teaching and mentoring, and the increasing problem of swelling student-faculty ratios. I offer the following five strategies for consideration by graduate psychology programs interested in creating a culture of mentoring. By "culture of mentoring," I refer to a psychology department characterized by: (a) faculty with intrinsic interest in and skills relevant to mentoring, (b) faculty who prize long-term, developmental, helping relationships with students, (c) faculty leaders who work to ensure that each admitted student is mentored, and (d) department leadership that encourages and rewards effective faculty mentors.

Generate faculty support for mentorship-enhancing program refinements

Because mentoring requires precious faculty time and resources, it is essential that a graduate department's primary stakeholders—the faculty—understand and support the importance of emphasizing and nurturing a culture of mentoring. Before instituting mentorship-enhancing refinements, it is wise to build support among faculty by generating discussions regarding how the program as a whole will benefit from more intentional mentoring (e.g., student satisfaction, more rapid dissertation completion, national reputation for education excellence). Further, faculty should be involved in brainstorming relevant to program refinements, innovative arrangements for matching new students with faculty mentors, and structures for both rewarding mentoring

excellence and handling dysfunction in mentor relationships. Positive attitudes and effective modeling relative to mentoring by program chairs and senior faculty leaders is also essential.

Consider mentoring potential when hiring new faculty

Although many advertisements for core graduate faculty positions mention student mentoring as an important job component, relatively few programs explicitly evaluate this dimension of candidate performance. Research indicates that not all psychologists are well suited to the mentor role (Clark et al., 2000; Cronan-Hillix et al., 1986). Graduate programs would be well served to carefully assess the mentoring experience, and track record of job applicants. This may be achieved through behaviorally based interviewing and contact with some of the candidate's former graduate students.

Prepare faculty for the mentor role

New faculty cannot be expected to understand the form and function of mentorships. Graduate programs should consider methods for intentionally preparing faculty for their role as mentor to graduate students. These methods might include a formal orientation with senior faculty mentors, workshops relevant to mentoring, and ongoing supervision of mentoring relationships (by seasoned faculty leaders) during the pre-tenure phase of employment. At the least, educational components of orientation should include examples of mentorship exemplars, mentor functions (Kram, 1985), and strategies for handling ethical dilemmas or conflicts in the mentor role.

Explicitly assess and reward faculty mentoring

After selecting promising faculty mentors, and providing mentoring orientation and supervision, graduate programs should seek innovative methods for evaluating and reinforcing mentoring behavior. Such efforts should be positively framed and designed to contribute to the program's larger outcome assessment design. Mentor assessments typically involve student-rating data—both objective and narrative. Reinforcements for excellent mentoring might include annual awards, weight in promotion/tenure decisions, credit in course load allocation, and various salary increments. As one example, graduate students in the psychology department at the University of Southern California initiated an annual anonymous assessment of all program faculty mentors (Cesa & Fraser, 1989). Rating data was made available to all faculty and graduate students each year, and students offered an annual award to an excellent faculty mentor. Not surprisingly, faculty performance in the mentor role increased significantly.

Create training-model specific mediums for mentoring

Although the traditional mentoring paradigm in graduate education is that of the single faculty-student dyad working intensively on scholarly/research endeavors over a period of several years, contemporary training models in professional psychology require new approaches to mentorship facilitation (Belar, 1998). Graduate programs must tailor approaches to mentoring to their unique missions and cultures. One promising medium for mentoring in larger professional programs is the vertical team model (Hughes et al., 1993). Using this approach, faculty lead research-oriented or clinically-oriented (depending on program training model) weekly team meetings for the purpose of teaching, modeling, and supervising student research or clinical work in the faculty member's area of expertise. Students select teams based on shared interests and the

faculty team leader becomes the student's program advisor. Using this approach, even programs with relatively large student numbers can facilitate faculty-student matching and mentorship formation.

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